

PEOPLE & THINGS

By ATTICUS

THIS year may see the release of one of the most baffling of twentieth-century prisoners: Frank Jackson, who was convicted in 1940 of the assassination of Trotsky and has been serving a twenty-year sentence in the Central Prison, Mexico City.

Jackson, alias Torkof, alias Mornard, alias Mercador del Rio, and a claimant in his heyday to Persian birth and Belgian, Canadian, Rumanian and Spanish nationality, has been one of those prisoners for whom a cell is, if not a pleasure-resort, at any rate a sure and tranquil refuge. Not for him the rats and fetters of traditional imprisonment. An exemplary inmate, robust in body and active in mind, he has become the prison's chief electrician. His "cell" is a two-room suite, shut off from the rest of the building by steel doors to which he has been given the key.

His meals are sent in from outside; he chose and bought his own furniture; and in his spare time he manufactures wireless sets with the help of apprentices recruited from among his fellow-prisoners. From all this (here "Paris-Match" is my informant) his income totals about £6,000 a year.

In the circumstances it is not surprising that he should have made no move to escape; and that the great problems—Who is he? What prompted him to kill Trotsky? Who is watching and waiting for his release?—remain unsolved.

The Two "Montys"

TOMORROW, Sir Compton Mackenzie will celebrate his seventy-second birthday with a party which, as the invitation says, "will begin at 8 p.m. and go on to any hour with champagne and sandwiches."

In his Edinburgh flat in Drummond Place Sir Compton is surrounded by most of his 12,000 books. With his trim white beard, his fine features and gaily-coloured corduroy trousers—green, crimson and blue are his favourites—he is the most picturesque figure in Scotland since "Don Roberto" Cunningham Graham, whom in many ways he resembles.

He is now writing the story of his musical life and talks of beginning his autobiography: an octave of eight volumes.

Since his return to Scotland his nickname has become so familiar that if someone mentions "Monty" to you in Edinburgh it is more than likely that he is referring not to the Field-Marshall, but to the author and Nationalist.

Theatrical Commotions

OF the two theatres in London which are now threatened with demolition, one—the Stoll—is an unamiable mammoth. Its Bolshoi proportions and quasi-oriental decoration (it is the Frascati among theatres) will, however, find their ideal complement when, later this month, "Prince Igor" is staged there by the Yugoslav National Opera Company.

The St. James's is a very different matter. It is the epitome of the small gilt-and-velvet playhouse, in which a wink can tell like a pistol shot and the relation between actor and audience has a confidential quality quite lacking in theatres of more "progressive" design. We cannot spare the St. James's.

But I hope that, if the worst comes to the worst and these theatres are sacrificed, something may come of other plans which I hear rumoured—the project for

instance, of a playhouse in the City of London, and the erection of the theatre in Notting Hill which Mr. Ashley Dukes has been hoping to build since 1936.

Sir M. and Mr. G.

AT least one great newspaper has taken note of the significant distortions in Courbet's great painting, "La Toilette de la Mariée," which is for the moment



Lord B. and Mr. G.

on loan at the National Gallery. ("In more than one of the heads," we read, "the artist has flattened the domed top of the skull.")

Courbet had no monopoly of this formal device. Just north of Trafalgar Square, in the Leicester Galleries, another master of formal design, Sir Max Beerbohm, has treated Mr. Gladstone's redoubtable cranium with a kindred irreverence. All but the gravest old Liberals will delight in the drawing, which is entitled "A

Recent Rapprochement in Elysium, or Lord B and Mr. G. 'For good or ill, at least we did do something!'"

Not only is it amusing in itself, but it reminds us of that streak of impatience in Sir Max's character which would have made him, had he so wished, the greatest political cartoonist of our day.

A Compliment Returned

THE experienced Francophile knows better than to suppose that his feelings will always be returned. An affectionate derision is often the best he can hope for. When, therefore, I saw that it had been said of Mr. Cecil Beaton that "when he describes the Inventions of Chanel, or Vionnet, or the couturiers of today, he analyses the style in question with the seriousness that others bring to the analysis of Watteau, Ingres and Renoir . . ." I at first supposed that the compliment must be of English or American origin.

I was wrong for the author is not only a Frenchman, but the Frenchman best qualified to judge in such matters: Monsieur Christian Dior. And his preface to the French edition of Mr. Beaton's latest book concludes with a noble profession of faith in his own activities. "After all," he says, "where civilisations are concerned, it is the perishable that endures."

Collapse of Stout Party

A SUBSCRIBER to the American "Theatre Arts" magazine dialled "Information" for the magazine's number. "Sorry," drawled the lady, "but there is nobody listed by the name of 'Theodore Arts'."

"It's not a person: it's a publication," insisted the subscriber. "I want 'Theatre Arts'."

The operator's voice rose a few decibels. "I told you," she repeated, "we have no listing for 'Theodore Arts'."

"Confound it," hollered the subscriber, "the word is Theatre: T-H-E-A-T-R-E."

"That," said the operator with crushing finality, "is not the way to spell Theodore!"